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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-Mexico, U.S.-Pakistan, Mideast,  
U.S.-Disarmament, Russia, Piracy

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- [1](#)1. Lead Stories Summary

Editorials focused on the debate over the ban on genetically modified organisms, the reaction to the financial crisis, and the debate over what to do with Somali pirates. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast Heute opened with a report on a study saying that gas prices should be considerably lower than they are today, while ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with a story on protests by farmers and environmental activists in Munich against patents on animals and plants.

- [1](#)2. (U.S.-Mexico) Obama Trip

"No War Is Closer," Frankfurter Allgemeine headlines on President Obama's trip to Mexico, and reported: "Barack Obama is traveling to Mexico. Since members of his government said that the neighbor is a 'failed state,' relations between the two nations are strained. But in the fight against drug cartels, both sides need each other. For more than four weeks, the Obama government is now trying to eliminate the tensions with Mexico for which itself it is responsible. During her visit to Mexico City at the beginning of April, Secretary of State Clinton several times emphasized the shared responsibility for the drug war because of the U.S.'s 'insatiable demand' for drugs and offered further support...in the fight against drugs. But of the promised 1.4 billion U.S. dollars that are to be used within three years, only seven million dollars have been transferred to Mexico."

Sueddeutsche Zeitung reported under the headline: "Neighbor out of Control," that "President Obama will have a 24-hour stopover in Mexico on his way to the 'Summit of the Americas,' which will take place in Trinidad & Tobago over the weekend. But this will be more than a courtesy visit. President Caldersn is demanding a reform of the U.S. immigration restrictions that Obama's predecessor planned to implement. Another bone of contention is drug policy. Thus far,

10,000 people have died since 2006 when Caldersn declared war on the 'narcos.' In 2008, more people have died in this war than in Iraq and Afghanistan. The State Department is alarmed, and drug traffickers are also on the rampage in the United States."

Tagesspiegel wrote: "In Mexico and Latin America, President Obama wants to remove the psychological obstacles of the Bush era. One week after his return from a lengthy European tour, President Obama will depart on Thursday for another lengthy trip to Mexico and the 'Summit of the Americas.' Like in Europe, Obama is striving for a change of the tone compared to the one of his predecessor George W. Bush. On the issues, however, there are a number of differences of opinion between Obama and the Latin American states. Psychological obstacles make rapprochement also difficult. In Mexico, President Caldersn expects Obama to say: Mexico is a functioning state and will win the war on drugs. At the OAS summit, psychology will also be important: the Latin American states blame the United States for the financial crisis."

### 13. (U.S.-Pakistan) Criticism of Zardari

Under the headline: "White House Strongly Criticized Zardari," Frankfurter Allgemeine reported: "The White House strongly criticized the introduction of the Islamic Sharia in Pakistan's Swat Valley, which the Pakistani government tolerated. In return, the Taliban have offered the government in Islamabad a cease-fire. Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari, like the National Assembly, approved the deal on Tuesday. White House spokesman Gibbs said that this step would undermine the respect for human rights."

Under the headline: "Capitulated," Frankfurter Allgemeine editorialized: "It was rather a capitulation in February, when the Pakistani government approved a bad peace agreement with the radical Islamic Taliban in the Swat Valley. But like similar agreements before which were concluded with radical Islamists in autonomous tribal areas, it has only strengthened the Pakistani Taliban. With the approval of the Pakistani president, not only was Sharia introduced but the number of armed fighters also increased. Thus the Pakistani state is giving up its territory step by step, even though without its active support, as special U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke emphasizes, stabilization in Afghanistan and the entire region cannot succeed."

### 14. (Mideast) Mitchell Trip, Peace Process

Financial Times Deutschland carried a report under the headline: "Mission Damage Control," and wrote: "U.S. special envoy George Mitchell is now travelling the Middle East to sound out the chances for peace. But with the government of hardliners in Israel, Israeli-U.S. friendship is facing a new stress test."

A Handelsblatt report headlined: "Two-State Solution Burdening Washington's Relations with Jerusalem," noted: "The U.S. government plans to breathe fresh air into the Middle East peace process. The special envoy for the Region, George Mitchell, will meet Israel's new Prime Minister Netanyahu in Jerusalem today. New conflicts are already evident. While U.S. President Obama unmistakably backed the foundation of a Palestinian state, the government in Jerusalem rejects the two-state solution. The differing positions are threatening to burden close U.S.-Israeli relations."

Sueddeutsche deals with the planned concert of conductor Daniel Barenboim in Egypt and writes about Arab-Israeli relations: "The fuss about Barenboim's appearance is also symptomatic for the political division of Egyptians. Many, including the ones in government and establishment, want to be more Palestinian than the Palestinians themselves. They know that their country concluded a peace agreement with Israel in 1979, but they think that they can still ignore it 30 years later. They refuse to normalize relations. What is lacking in Egypt and many Arab countries is the insight that normalization of relations with Israel cannot be equated with a lack of criticism of Israel. It is a reality that Israel exists and is globally recognized, that it will give up the Palestinian territories only after tough pressure and that nothing can be achieved with military violence. That is why reconciliation and dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis remain a precondition and the only chance to realize the rights of the Palestinians."

#### 15. (U.S.) Obama's Disarmament Proposals

In a front-page editorial, Frankfurter Allgemeine judged: "While the new U.S. president has launched a new disarmament initiative, North Korea is turning the escalation screws. It is probably the attempt to find out how steadfast Obama is and what concessions can be forced out of him. If North Korea continues to stick to its announcements, one thing must be kept in mind: all previous attempts to prompt the regimes in North Korea, but also in Iran, to show moderation and to bring about a lasting and verifiable change of their nuclear policies have failed. This is the initial point where the U.S. government finds itself right now. Over the past few weeks, the new U.S. president outdid himself with niceties and with gestures of rapprochement. But they do not offer any certainty that Iran will really show any willingness to make concessions in the matter itself. Why should it do this anyway? Why should it now enter into serious talks whose goal it would be, according to western views, to stop a project on which Iran has worked for more than 20 years? What would be more appropriate for Iran than behaving in a brittle way and to wait and see what real concessions Obama will offer? Thus far, Tehran has gone scot-free despite UN resolutions. Why should it now change its strategy? In Prague, Obama said that America wants to maintain a nuclear arsenal to deter 'potential enemies' and that the U.S. wants to build a missile defense system as long as Iran's activities pose a threat. Russia, which wants to prevent such a system, would now have a stimulus to use its influence on Iran - if it wanted to."

#### 16. (Russia) Medvedev Interview

Under the headline: "Medvedev Disassociates Himself From Parts of Putin's Policy," Die Welt noted; "Russian President Medvedev presented himself as a friend of surprising changes. After almost one year in office, he gave his first interview to the opposition paper Nowaja Gazeta, the paper which as one of the few Russian papers critically follows the Kremlin's policy and which is hated within the state's bureaucracy and the military because of its stubbornness. The interview confirms the impression people could get before: the President is taking on an attitude towards the newspaper which differs from the one of his predecessor Putin. But it is highly uncertain whether the new relations with the Russian opposition indicate a phase of greater tolerance and democracy."

Handelsblatt editorialized: "Dmitrij Medvedev has never been and will never be Vladimir Putin. Russia's Premier and ex-President is a product of the Cold War. The KGB has formed his understanding of democracy, while his successor is a member of the younger generation which considers the West not an enemy but a model. That is why Medvedev can now present himself as a perfect democrat in a newspaper interview and foil Putin. But this does by no means mean that a new spirit is now prevailing on top of the state. Medvedev, too, knows his limits. He confines himself to making nice words and symbolic gestures, but he does not act either in the Chodorkovsky trial or in the farce concerning the hunt for the murderer of Anna Politikowskaja."

#### 17. (Africa) Anti-Piracy Efforts

Frankfurter Allgemeine judged: "It is not that easy: On the one side, we have the unerring Americans who do not include justice authorities in their efforts to fight pirates and the self-confident French who put the pirates immediately on trial in the mother country of human rights. On the other side, we have the Germans who believe in the rule of law but who allow lawyers and Somali pirates to make a fool of them. The EU has reached an agreement with Kenya on the transfer and the sentencing of pirates. But the EU states, including Germany, are trying to safeguard the respect of minimum standards. This solution may be more favorable than a trial in Europe. But it would be even better if the fertile ground for piracy could be dried or military actions could be more efficient. This does not mean not to make prisoners, but it would require deterrence and a disciplined attitude of all cargo ships."

Weekly Die Zeit argued: "Tough action against the pirates is necessary to prevent something that has thus far been a nightmare for anti-terror strategists: that the Somali Ocean gangsters in flip-flops ally with Islamic terrorists. Once before, al Qaida has copied an old terror model, the hijacking of aircraft, for its

purposes. Two hijacked giant tankers, being blown up in the Gulf of Aden would force the global economy to its knees for weeks. This would be a maritime 9/11."

Regional daily Stuttgarter Zeitung had this to say: "Thus far it was up to Americans and French to free their hostages with commando actions. There is always a great risk that innocent people will also die in such rescue operations. That is why each case must be carefully weighed. On the other hand, the global community cannot allow the hijacking of ships day by day. Not only the EU, NATO, and the United States have maritime forces off the Horn of Africa, China, India, Japan and Russia have also sent war ships to the Gulf of Aden. They must begin to use their weapons in clearly targeted a moderate way."